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Peace on Earth The Hope That Christmas Brings

"And on Earth Peace"

CHRISTMAS DAY in the year 1914 will dawn upon a world almost one half of which is involved in the fierce and inhuman strife of war; a war that has hardly a parallel in all history, a war in which all the genius and cunning of human invention seems to be concentrated to devise means of human slaughter and the destruction of products of long centuries of human toil and skill.

Brave men in the strength and vigor of their manhood, with all the possibilities of planning and working along those lines that make for progress and the well being of the nations of the earth, leaving the industry and constructive labors of peace, leaving homes where they have been the providers and protectors, leaving loved ones dependent upon them to go forth to kill and be killed, to destroy and maim or to be destroyed or maimed for life. The important matter of the hour is not who is to blame for this terrible orgy of murder; this is no time to spend in criminations and recriminations; the awful fact of war in Europe, the very antithesis of Peace, is the all important and awful fact.

And yet, the promise of the Christmas Day, the day that commemorates the coming of the Christ and the beginning of Christianity is "peace on earth." But is there peace in lands where there is no war? In our own America, we answer, there is peace and the appearances seem to verify such an answer; but underneath the apparently tranquil surface, is there peace? Can there be peace where there are the strifes between capital and labor, where thousands upon thousands of bread winners are out of work and the means of earning bread. Can there be peace when men are striving against one another in the scramble for money or place? When slander and false report, the perversion of facts and the misrepresentation of the motives of others are the weapons men use to gain their ends? Can there be peace in homes where want and wretchedness dwell? Look still deeper, into the hearts and lives of individuals; for surely peace is an empty meaningless thing if it may not come into the hearts and lives of men and women.

The duties, cares, anxieties and problems of life throng and possess many of us and we are crying "peace, peace, when there is no peace." So many who talk and act as though the burdens they have to bear multiply and grow heavier, while they are constantly rushed onward to meet new duties and new problems which challenge to accomplishment or solution.

There is the feeling that much is required and there is no time for peace. The purpose is noble and sincere and men realize that to meet all the responsibilities which are laid upon them, the mind must be clear, the interest and attention of the mental faculties, earnest and intense; the heart strong in purpose to lay hold upon the sentinels who guard the outposts of a larger and better life for the race, and press on beyond the picket lines into the age of enlightenment and progress. But is it not true that the thing essential to this is peace, such peace as Christianity promised?

The fabled Atlas bearing on his shoulders the whole Earth pales in to the insignificance of a nursery jingle compared with the burden of responsibility which so many human souls imagine they are bearing. The very atmosphere of the times seems to be freighted with grave questions of reform, the work that must be done by some men and women for the welfare of other men and women, the achievement of a larger freedom for the race. "Peace on Earth" that proclamation came to a world wearied with strife, in the centuries of the long ago and brought to that world a new hope, the hope of peace where there had been for so long strife and wanderings, rest from the hatred that filled men's souls and set them at enmity against one another. Peace in which men might go forth to build up their homes to add to the comfort and pleasures of their loved ones and work out the heaven sent thoughts for larger, better, nobler life; might indeed be builders together with The Divine Master Builder of the Universe.

Then came Jesus of Nazareth, Himself possessing that peace and showing men how they might also possess it. Calling to all men "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Still more than this, He longed to bestow that peace upon men hear his words to those who gathered about him: "My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth give I unto you."

By small degrees men came to realize the significance of the example and teachings of The Master and began to experience that

"Peace beginning to be,
As deep as the deep of the sea;
Where the stars, their faces glass
In its blue tranquility."

Peace came to men wherever the teachings of the Christ were received, the great fact of The Fatherhood of God and the correlative fact of the brotherhood of man began to dawn upon men; they worked together in mutual helpfulness and together solved the great problems of life. Love rather than hate became the ruling passion and the world moved onward to the larger and better things and the hope that Christmas brought began to be realized.

The great value and need of peace must be obvious to every careful student of current events, not only in Europe but in all the Earth and among all men. Granting this need, does this coming Christmas Day bring to men the same hope of peace as the first Christmas brought to men in the long ago? If God still reigns over all, if "God's in his heaven and all's right with the world", there can be but one answer to that question. His words are sure and steadfast and what He proclaimed in the long ago He still proclaims, "Peace on Earth."

Why then is there this dearth of peace, has Christianity failed? The fault is not with Christianity; Christianity has not broken down in Europe, nor yet in America. But nations have not been relying upon nor practicing Christianity they have been depending upon the selfish substitutes for Christianity, alliances, secret diplomacy and armaments and all these have failed miserably. Whenever and wherever true Christian principles have been fairly applied whether between nations or individuals, Justice and peace have resulted. What is true in the life of nations is true in the lives of individuals. Christianity still brings to the earth peace and as men and women the world over on this Christmas Day bring their hearts and minds to the contemplation of the teachings of true Christianity, as they actually believe and practice what they profess to believe of its principles they will find that Christmas still brings the proclamation of "Peace on Earth" the greatest and best of all Christmas gifts.

The Day of the Child By WILBUR D. NESBIT

THE tree shines with the
candle glow,
The tinkles glitter jewel-
wise,
And we would that our souls
might know
The joy told in the chil-
dren's eyes.
Such sheer delight as this of
theirs—
A wondrous happiness
it is!
And every word the mes-
sage bears:
This is the children's day
—and His!

LET us come, as the Wise
Men came
Those nineteen centuries
agone,
Led by the Star's eternal
flame
That bade them rise and
hasten on.
They brought rare frankin-
cense and myrrh,
They brought rich gems
and graven gold,
They knelt, adoring, near to
Him,
And all their marvelings
they told.

AYE, as those Men of long
ago,
Today we, too, may see
the Star,
May see its mystic heaven-
ly glow
Flash out o'er Childland
fair and far,
And from our hands now fall
the gifts
And we know why the
Wise Men smiled
With gratefulness; and each
heart lifts
Its chant of worship of
the Child.

Good Will To Men The Pledge of Christmas To Mankind

"Good will toward men"

THE Christmas pledge of Heaven to mankind is Good Will and that pledge was exemplified and translated so that men might fully understand it by The Christ whose advent among men Christmas Day commemorates. In the light of that exemplification and translation, men have been taught that the good will of God toward men is the love, the care and the interest of a kind and wise Father for his children; that it is mercy and patience with human falterings and failings; that it brings new courage and cheer, inspiration and strength to the hearts of men; that it is love and kindly direction in the ways of truth and peace. It is this good will that found expression in the attitude of Jesus of Nazareth toward men. "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with me." The Christ was himself the pledge of God's good will toward men and as a further explanation of what that good will is there are the Christ's own words that he came not to destroy but to save; to minister to the deepest needs of humanity and that men might have life more abundantly.

He came to do the will of the Father and that will was to bless, not curse; to heal, not wound; to lift up, not cast down. This is the pledge of Christmas and this is why the Christmas festival is and should be a happy joyous one. It reveals God's will toward men as good will. God not a deity of supreme and arbitrary power visiting wrath and destruction upon those creatures of his who transgress his arbitrary laws but a Heavenly Father who cares for his children makes known to them the ways of truth and peace which lead to happiness and life, comforts them in their distresses, goes out after them when they wander into wrong doing and seeks by love to win them from ways that lead to their undoing.

The good will of God is love, infinite unchanging eternal love and that love is the greatest thing in the world. Greatest, because it is more potent for good than any other factor or force that enters into human life. This good will is toward all men there are no excluded, the rich and poor, those of low or high degree, saint and sinner, for all alike is God's good will. With God there are no castes or classes, all men are his children; possession of money does not make anyone a child of God, lack of money does not hinder anyone from being his child. Classes and degrees are for the most part simply divisions that are drawn by men themselves and in assigning degrees or stations of human honor and esteem men sometimes forget that in the judgment of Heaven the greatest among men are those who minister to and serve best their fellow men.

"Good will toward men", the greatest and best of all Christmas gifts. We have heard much of the spirit of Christmas and we shall hear much more of it let us hope for we never can hear too much of it. It can never be too often interpreted nor can it be too often considered; and the very essence of the spirit of Christmas is this good will of Heaven toward men. The pity is that this pledge of Christmas is not remembered all the year round instead, as is the case among so many, of just during the Christmas season. God's good will toward men is constant unceasing every day of the three hundred and sixty-five. If we could only all of us keep this fact ever in mind we might have the joyful happy spirit of Christmas within us all the year round and there would be more men who would answer to the specifications of it.

"The man worth while,
Is the man who will smile
When everything goes dead wrong."

We have been talking about the good will toward men but that is not all that enters into the joyous spirit of Christmas. God's good will is infalling but it does not follow that all men accept that good will; men may refuse it, ignore it, shut up their lives against it just as you can shut up the doors and windows of a house to exclude the light of the sun. Has it ever occurred to you that God himself never forces himself upon any personality.

"Behold I stand at the door and knock"; that is the attitude of Our Father in Heaven. He appeals, he reveals, he shows the way of life, truth, peace and happiness. He directs and makes known the immutable laws, but men must choose for themselves, they are free moral agents, if they are recipients of God's good will it must be because they of their own free will open their hearts to it and receive it. There is a suggestion here for all of us, we need to keep the windows of our souls open on the heavenward side, always open to receive the light of God's Love and Truth. Sometimes men become so absorbed in intellectual things or commercial or political or scientific things or even in their own griefs and troubles that they forget to keep their souls open on the Godward side, forget that after all the power the ability the knowledge for all things that are really worth while must come into the souls of men from that source. Would it not be a fine thing for all of us to use a part of this Christmas season to think on these things and to see to it that our hearts and lives are open all the time to the incoming of the light and strength and peace of Our Heavenly Father's love?

There is one more phase of this pledge of good will toward men that should not be passed by; if men have received the good will of Heaven in their lives they will not be able to hide it there, it will shine out from those lives not only in good will toward God but in good will toward all other men. It is this very fact that finds demonstration in the spirit of the Christmas season, when men women and children who have never known want or hardship in their lives vie with those who have, to bring comfort and cheer and pleasure to those who are in want and wretchedness and misery. Witness the good will of those who have, in the great cities of the land for those who have not; the Christmas Ship sent from this land of plenty to those who are in misery and hardships in war stricken Belgium and France. Witness the gifts to friends far away and almost forgotten the messages of cheer and good will that are sent back and forth through all the land; witness the forgetting of old animosities and the heartiness of cordial greetings from those who have gone through all the year silent and morose; witness the reunions and family gatherings and be glad for the coming of Christmas that some how opens the hearts of men and women to the incoming of the heavenly good will and so fills them that they overflow with the cheer and good will that really binds all men together in one great grand brotherhood, where race and creed and social distinction are all forgotten and all together look up to say "Our Father who art in heaven."